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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

Honorable Nicholas deB. Katzenbach
Under Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are pleased that you are taking steps to correct the problems stemming from the CIA financing of the National Student Association.

We feel the government should openly assist student groups to keep in touch with students in other countries.

We wish to urge consideration of a related problem. We believe that dialogue between the people of different nations needs to be established at the political level. Political concepts and ideology need to be discussed and explored among political activists and movements around the world. Neither government-to-government relationships nor the various inter-parliamentary meetings fill this need. There is presently no adequate federal program specifically designed to promote international political as well as educational or professional contact and dialogue. Past hearings by the House Foreign Affairs Committee have pointed this out.

Accordingly, we urge study of the ways in which international contact and communication among political activists and organizations can be stimulated by enlightened federal policy. We believe other countries have taken exemplary steps in this direction from which we can profitably learn. There are many Americans whose experience in international affairs would enable them to make original and creative proposals for such programs.

We commend for your consideration, the creation of a non-governmental, bipartisan institution headed by a small group of prominent Americans who have been active in our political life.

Such an organization could identify and sponsor projects which would permit Americans to pursue international contacts in an open manner. It could be the beneficiary of contracts from government as well as from private foundations. It could sponsor international meetings, seminars, and other activities. It would enable politically active citizens from a wide variety of organizations to attend such events abroad.

Such an institution, we hope, would be independent enough to encourage diversity as it promoted dialogue. Free from direct government control, it could encourage serious political communication which would serve to acquaint the world with the vitality of political life in our democracy. Such communication would also serve to deepen our own understanding of political dynamics and ideology in other nations.

We believe it is imperative that consideration be given to moving in this direction. Evidence of CIA activity has now given publicity to this area, but we are convinced that the case for open federal assistance in promoting independent international political dialogue stands on its own merits.

Sincerely,